Indo-Bangladesh relations

2521. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA:Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India's relation with Bangladesh have soured recently because of several contentious issues;

(b) if so, the details thereof, and

(c) the steps initiated to solve the disputed issues and the response of the Government of Bangladesh thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise

(c) The Government of India holds regular discussions with the Government of Bangladesh at all levels including highest political level on all issues pertaining to India-Bangladesh relations.

Foreign Minister's Kabul visit

2522. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA:

PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether he had visited Kabul on way to Islamabad;

(b) if so, the issues discussed in Kabul and the understandings reached as a result thereof; and

(c) how far, if paves the way for establishing transit trade between India and Afghanistan through Pakistan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) to (c) External Affairs Minister visited Kabul on 15 February, 2005. He called on President Karzai and Baba-e-Millat and former King Zahir Shah and met Foreign Minister Dr. Abdullah. In the discussions with Afghan leaders, bilateral relations were reviewed, including India's assistance programmes for the reconstruction effort in

Afghanistan. Both India and Afghanistan have taken up the issue of transit through Pakistan for goods/materials, including under India's assistance programmes, to Afghanistan.

Indo-Russian Nuclear Agreements

2523. DR. KARAN SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Russia is working on the possibility of including India as a non-voting member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group in a bid to clear the supply of four nuclear reactors, which has been held up because of international objection;

(b) if so, whether both India and Russia are working hard to clear the way for better understanding in the defence, nuclear and oil sectors;

(c) if so, whether Russian President's visit to India during 2005, he is expected to sign 14 agreements;

(d) if so, whether both countries have worked to clear these agreements; and

(e) if so, the details of the same and to what extent India would be fully sufficient in defence needs?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) and (b) An Agreement between India and the former USSR on cooperation in the construction of a Nuclear Power Station in India consisting of two light water reactors of 1000 MW each was signed on November 20,1988. A Supplement to this Agreement was concluded in 1998 between India and Russia. Work on the construction of the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project is progressing on schedule. Russia is a member of the ad hoc Nuclear Suppliers Group. In our bilateral dialogue with Russia, an area of focus for expanding cooperation has been the energy sector, including thermal, hydel and nuclear energy for power production. India's cooperation with Russia today in the defence field and oil sector is mutually beneficial.

(c) The President of the Russian Federation H.E. Mr. Vladimir Putin had visited India on 3-5 December, 2004 for the India-Russia Annual Summit.